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Administrator

Senate Panel To Vote On Pruitt On Wednesday.

[The Hill](#) (1/27, Cama) reports Senate Environment and Public Works Committee Chairman John Barrasso announced Friday that the committee will vote Wednesday on Oklahoma Attorney General Scott Pruitt's nomination to serve as Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency. The Hill says Pruitt will “likely...pass the committee vote along party lines. The panel has 11 Republicans and 10 Democrats, and no senator has indicated a plan to buck his or her party.” The Hill adds, “The Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee has scheduled a meeting the day before to vote on confirming Energy secretary nominee Rick Perry and Interior secretary nominee Ryan Zinke.”

[E&E Publishing](#) (1/27, Bogardus) reports that Pruitt “looks likely to be confirmed by the GOP-controlled Senate...on a party-line vote with Republicans rallying to his side.”

EPA Media Blackout Creates Uncertainty For Scientific Community.

The [Business Insider](#) (1/28, Letzter) reports that “it’s impossible to know for sure” what is going on inside the EPA since the agency implemented a ban on all public communications and stopped accepting requests from journalists for information. The information coming out of the agency is largely from “anonymous sources from within the agency,” although some details, such as the temporary freeze on grants and contracts, has been confirmed by media outlets. Scientists and project managers that depend on EPA grants and data say they are left feeling anxious by the “mix of silence and disturbing leaks.”

Pruitt Previously Opposed Power Project Likely To Be Prioritized Under Trump Administration.

[E&E Publishing](#) (1/30, Tomich) reported that EPA Administrator-designate Scott Pruitt has previously opposed a Plains and Eastern Clean Line transmission line that is expected to a top priority for the Trump administration. As Oklahoma attorney general, Scott Pruitt's office told the Department of Energy that the Clean Line project “is not technically or financially feasible and is not in the public interest.” Clean Line says the project would “create an estimated 3,300 jobs, bolster energy security and help modernize the grid.”

WPost Questions Pruitt's Commitment To Chesapeake Bay Cleanup.

A [Washington Post](#) (1/29) editorial raises questions about EPA Administrator-designate Scott

Pruitt's commitment to cleaning up the Chesapeake Bay. According to the Post, during his hearing before the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee this month, Pruitt "seemed to embrace the bay cleanup effort," but when Sen. Ben Cardin "pressed him further in written questions, Mr. Pruitt's commitment to the cleanup deal got murkier." The Post argues that "a strong federal hand" is needed in the cleanup effort and it will "hold Mr. Pruitt to his encouraging tone during his in-person questioning."

Small: Pruitt Is Right Choice To Lead EPA.

In an op-ed in the Alva (OK) Review-Courier, (1/29, Small) Jonathon Small, president of the Oklahoma Council of Public Affairs, defends the nomination of Scott Pruitt to lead the EPA, saying "neither Pruitt nor any of his supporters would want to abolish the agency." Instead, "they simply want to restore some sanity and stop runaway rule making by unelected bureaucrats."

Additional Reading.

- **EPA Chief Needs To Be Confirmed Sooner Rather Than Later.** Alpena (MI) News. (1/29)
- **Trump's EPA Secretary Will Have '16,000 Employees Working Against Him'.** Daily Caller. (1/28, Bedford)

Air

Air District Seeks Voluntary Emissions Reductions From Industry.

The Los Angeles Daily Breeze (1/27, Danelski) reported that the South Coast Air Quality Management District is "poised to approve a 15-year air cleanup plans that contains no emissions limits for the ports, rail yards or warehouse complexes," which are some of the region's "greatest sources of harmful emissions." According to the air district, "now is the time to seek cooperation from industry, not impose restrictions." Executive officer of the air district, Wayne Nastri, "said he first wants to determine what reductions the cargo-handing industries are willing to make on their own."

Additional Reading.

- **Air Pollution: Companies, States See Downside To Regulatory Freeze.** E&E Publishing. (1/30, Reilly)

Brownfields/Superfund/Other Cleanups

Additional Reading.

- **EPA: Nassau Cleanup Effort Unchanged By Federal Turmoil.** Albany (NY) Times Union. (1/27)
- **After Gold King spill, EPA Didn't Communicate Enough, Now Ordered To Not Communicate At All.** Colorado Springs (CO) Gazette. (1/27)
- **Colorado EPA officials: Media Blackout Won't Affect Lincoln Park Superfund Site.** Canon City (CO) Daily Record. (1/29)
- **Claims Coal-Fired Plant Polluted River.** AP. (1/29, Matisse).
- **Presidential Transition Will Not Affect East Chicago Cleanup, EPA Official Says.** Merrillville (IN) Post-Tribune. (1/29)
- **PCB Study Along NY's Hudson River Continuing Despite Order.** Albany (NY) Times Union. (1/28)

- **EPA Gives All-Clear To Pollution Grants For Minnesota.** Minneapolis (MN) Star Tribune. (1/29, Marcotty)

Climate Change

EPA Spokesman Says Climate Change Website Will Be Updated.

E&E Publishing (1/27, Hess) reported that EPA spokesman Doug Ericksen said the agency's climate change page on its website will be "updated, hopefully next week sometime." His comments came in response to efforts by Tom Steyer's NextGen Climate to "preserve the information presented on the agency's climate change site."

Group Copies, Shares EPA Website On Climate Change. The Los Angeles Times (1/27) reports NextGen Climate copied the EPA's website and made it available at SaveOurEPA.com. "As Americans, we will not allow Donald Trump to erase the truth or rewrite history," Tom Steyer said in a statement. "This information belongs to the people, and the public has a right to know the truth."

EPA To Sponsor Climate Change Conference.

ClimateWire (1/27, Chernick) reported that the EPA is listed as a headline sponsor of the three-day Climate Leadership Conference, which will award private-sector companies for achievements in carbon reduction. Although "the EPA will likely be led soon by a climate skeptic," there have been no reports that the conference will be impacted.

Some Scientists Concerned About Trump Administration's Impact On Research.

The Hill (1/27, Henry) reports some scientists and researchers are concerned that the Trump Administration could harm scientific research, and some are now planning a "Science March on Washington" to be held this spring. The article reports that many scientists have criticized the removal of references to climate change from several federal websites.

NYTimes Analysis: Politics, Social Pressure Complicate Climate Change In America's Breadbasket.

A more than 2,950 word New York Times (1/28, Tabuchi) analysis reports that climate change has become a "critical business issue" with the "economic realities of agriculture" in "America's breadbasket and conservative heartland." Farmers in the region "focus on practical issues like erosion or dwindling aquifers," but generally don't mention the term climate change. The Times says that "politics and social pressure make frank discussion complicated," with "conservative orthodoxy maintain[ing] that the science isn't settled."

Federal Websites See Spike In Downloads Related To Climate Change.

The Washington Post (1/27, Kaplan) reports that according to data from analytics.usa.gov, several pages related to climate change have seen a spike in traffic in the week since President Trump's inauguration. "As of Friday morning, a National Park Service report about the agency's 'Cultural Resources Climate Change Strategy' was the most downloaded document from a government website." At EPA, nine of the top ten downloads were related to climate change.

Energy

NYTimes Calls For Better Health Protections Surrounding Los Angeles Oil Wells.

In an editorial, the New York Times (1/30) laments the health toll oil wells have taken on the poorer neighborhoods of Los Angeles. The Times acknowledges proposed reforms from a lawsuit settlement in which “the city would hold a public hearing and conduct an evaluation of potential health and environmental consequences for each new drilling project, and require oil companies to mitigate any health hazards.” However, the Times criticizes the moves for failing to measure up to “the specific steps other cities and states have taken” and calls for “a buffer zone law” to protect poor residents’ health.

SBee: Clean Energy Can Boost Job Creation.

In an editorial, the Sacramento (CA) Bee (1/27) wrote that “between 2000 and 2014, 32 states besides California grew their economies while reducing their carbon emissions at the same time, according to a recent analysis from the Brookings Institution.” That trend is accelerating, showing a decoupling of emissions from economic activity. The Bee argues that President Trump’s job-creation efforts focused on fossil fuels ignores the volume of jobs created in clean energy.

International

Additional Reading.

- **Chinese New Year Fireworks Spark a Return to Hazardous Beijing Pollution.** New York (NY) Times. (1/28, Reuters)
- **China Auditor Says 17.6 Bln Yuan Of Funds To Fight Water Pollution Misused.** Reuters. (1/29)
- **In Frigid Cold, Mongolians Stand In Protest Of Air Pollution.** AP. (1/28)

Other News

Chamber’s Study On Sue-And-Settle At The EPA Noted By Columnist.

In a column for the Washington Times (1/26), Kelly Riddell criticizes the EPA, arguing the agency “and its environmental counterparts within the federal bureaucracy need reigning in — it’s a measure that’s long overdue.” She notes that those at the EPA “don’t work for the American people, but rather to advance their environmentalism agenda.” Riddell explains that under the Obama administration, “sue and settle” became “common practice at the agency,” where “rather than going through the rule-making process, ... environmental activists — who were ideological allies with those at the EPA — would sue the agency.” The agency would “settle these cases, and in their settlement hash out new regulations.” According to the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, “between 2009 and 2012, the EPA chose not to defend itself in over 60 lawsuits from special interest advocacy groups,” which resulted in over 100 new regulations, including the Clean Power Plan.

Rules/Regulations/Policy

GOP Resolutions To Undo Coal, Methane Rules “Likely To Pass.”

The Hill (1/27, Henry) reports House Republicans are preparing to vote next week on two resolutions that would “undo” two Interior Department rules from the Obama Administration — “one protecting streams from coal mining waste and another to cut methane emissions at oil and natural

gas drilling sites.” House Natural Resources Committee Chairman Rep. Rob Bishop called the rules “abusive, last minute regulations.” Because President Trump “has said he would undo federal regulations on the fossil fuel industry,” both resolutions “are likely to pass.”

Congressional Republicans Prepare Legislation To Overturn Energy Regulations.

The Houston Chronicle (1/27) reported Congressional Republicans are preparing legislation that would undo key elements of the Obama Administration’s efforts to reduce the oil and gas industry’s impact on greenhouse gas emissions and climate change. Bills are being prepared that would overturn an executive order from last year that cut the amount of methane that is vented and flared from drilling sites on federal and tribal land. Another piece of legislation would overturn an order protecting streams and wildlife around coal mines. Rep. Bob Bishop said, “These are abusive last-minute regulations that are grossly inconsistent with congressional intent. ... They will impose a real an unnecessary cost on American people and communities.” Fox News (1/29) reports opponents of the rules criticized them as job killers that hold the US economy back. Supporters say that the rules will help to reduce up to 180,000 tons of gas released annually and would help to preserve healthy drinking water.

EPA Regulatory Freeze A Downside For Some States, Firms.

E&E News PM (1/27, Reilly) reports a blanket regulatory freeze imposed by the Trump administration “has also swept up routine measures that are technically classified as rules but may be in fact be welcomed by states and industry.” The EPA’s determination that most of Louisiana’s petrochemical belt is in compliance with a 2008 ozone air quality standard, and other moves in Kentucky, New York, and California are among the 30 EPA rules whose effective dates were pushed back until March 21, “although the delays will probably have little practical impact, state regulators are typically eager for authority to run their own program.” Additional delays are possible according to a memo from White House Chief of Staff Reince Priebus to agencies.

Auto Industry Speaks Out On Fuel-Economy Rules.

Bloomberg News (1/27, Butters) reported Ford Motor CEO Mark Fields told the audience at the National Automobile Dealers Association (NADA) convention in New Orleans that “about 1 million US jobs are at risk if fuel-economy rules don’t align with market reality.” Ford delivered these statistics to President Trump, along with GM CEO Mary Barra and Fiat Chrysler’s Sergio Marchionne, and said the executives “didn’t ask to have fuel-economy standards eliminated during their meeting.” The Verge (1/28, Liptak) reported the three urged President Trump to contemplate “combining various sets of government regulations and ensuring they take into account consumer demand.” Fields said the group talked about “the possibility of a national fuel standard, ‘instead of different numbers from two federal agencies and the state of California,’ and that there needed to be a balance between environmental protection, consumer affordability and manufacturing jobs.” WardsAuto (1/27, Zoia) reported Trump and the executives talked about “one national standard implementation that would be aligned with market realities, affordability and jobs.” According to Carlson, they also spoke about trade pacts and tax policy, and he believes Trump will “be very good for our industry.”

Reuters (1/29, Carey) reports other auto makers expressed similar sentiments, looking to President Trump “to ease federal regulation of vehicle emissions and consumer lending, reversing action taken by his predecessor.” NADA Chairman Mark Scarpelli stated the technology necessary “to improve fuel efficiency can add \$1,500 to \$3,000 to a vehicle’s price.” He suggested a “different phase-in period” for the regulations could be a better plan.

Toxics/TSCA

Pruitt Avoids Specifics On Chemical Security Policies.

Bloomberg BNA (1/29, Pearson) reported that when asked about tougher regulatory policies for high-risk chemical facilities, EPA Administrator-designate Scott Pruitt avoided specific answers, responding, “I believe that every American should be provided safe home and work environments and people who live or work in and around chemical facilities are no exception to that.” When asked if chemical companies should take actions to prevent explosions, he declined to list any specific actions that a company should take.

Water

Additional Reading.

- **Worrying And Still Waiting For Safe Drinking Water After Cancer Claimed Her Daughter.** Fresno (CA) Bee. (1/29)
- **Cuomo Gets Report On Lead In School Drinking Water.** Newsday (NY). (1/27)
- **NY Senators Propose \$5 Billion Bond Act To Fund Water Quality Projects.** Auburn (NY) Citizen. (1/28)
- **71 Percent Of Utah’s Lakes Don’t Meet Standards, With Toxic Algae Growing Into A Major Issue.** Salt Lake (UT) Tribune. (1/29)

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